



Vocabulary Collage (Grades 7-12)

In this sample activity, students create a collage, title it with a made-up word based on root words, prefixes and suffixes, and write a short explanatory text about their piece. This is a good example of how to integrate art into an activity that builds literacy skills.

Duration: 1 week or longer (can be extended)

Learning Goals

- Understand how root words, prefixes and suffixes can be used to discern the meaning of a word
- Become familiar with the meanings of common root words, pre-fixes and suffixes
- Practice writing explanatory texts

Materials Needed

- Black/whiteboard or chart paper on easel
- Copies of *Root Words, Prefixes and Suffixes* (see attached)
- Student-friendly magazines, e.g. Time for Kids, Highlights, etc.
- Scissors
- Poster board
- Glue
- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Large index cards

Preparation

- Set a date and invite family and community members to a student art event.
- Set up room for small group work (3-5 individuals per group) in arts and crafts
- Print one copy of *Root Words, Prefixes and Suffixes* per group
- Distribute supplies so that each group has a few magazines, a poster board, some glue and scissors; set aside writing paper and pencils/pens until after collages are completed
- Bring in example or print picture of transformer toy and write “transformer” on the black/whiteboard or chart paper on easel

What to Do

- Engage students by asking them to guess how the “transformer toy” got its name. Hint that they can discover the answer by looking at the handout. Show them how each word part in “transformer” has a meaning that when put together explains the way the toy works: <trans> = across, over; <form> = to make, <er> = a person, thing performing an act
- Explore the *Root Words, Prefixes and Suffixes* handout with the students. Have them brainstorm other examples of words that use the root words, prefixes or suffixes on the sheet and ask them to explain how knowing the meaning of the word part helps them



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decode the meaning of the word. Record these example words and their word part(s) on the black/whiteboard or chart paper.

- Explain to the students that they will be creating a collage, giving it a name using a combination of the word parts on the handout, and writing a short explanatory text about their collage. Their collages will form an art display for family and community members. For example, if students put together a collage of different scenes from around the world and a machine made up of various parts, they might name it “trans-geoscope,” a machine that can look across the world. Their text would clearly and accurately explain what the collage represents and how it got its title.
- Organize students into small groups. Encourage groups to spend five minutes looking over the magazines for pictures to inspire their collage. Each group should work together to make a collage that is as creative and unique as possible. As each group completes their collage, give them some paper and writing utensils and have them try out different combination of word parts to title their work. After students agree on a title, have them collaborate on writing an informational text that explains what their collage represents and how the collage got its title. The title of the collage, the names of the artists, and a final copy of the text should be written neatly on an index card and displayed next to the collage, similar to a display card in a museum.
- Present the collages to family and community members at a student art event. Have each group stand by their collage and explain their piece to visitors.
- Extend learning if time allows: Give small groups newspaper articles or other short informational texts and have a competition to see which group can find the most words with word parts from the handout in a pre-determined amount of time. Students can also create sculptures for this activity using clay, found objects, etc.

Evaluate (Outcomes to Look For)

- Students recognize word parts in the words they encounter
- Students identify how word parts convey the meaning of a word
- Students work collaboratively to create an art piece
- Student write an explanatory text that conveys their ideas and information about their collage clearly and accurately

Adapted “Name That Junk” activity in *Fun Literacy Activities for After-School Programs* by Sue Edwards and Kathleen Martinez, School-Age Notes, Nashville, TN, 2004.



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Root Words, Prefixes and Suffixes

Include definitions of root words, combining forms, prefixes, and suffixes for staff

Combining forms	Meaning	Examples
Astro	Star	Astronomy
Auto	Self	Autobiography
Bio	Life	Biography
Brevi	Short, brief	Abbreviate
Chrono	Time	Chronometer
Cosmo	World, universe	Cosmological
Denti, dent	Tooth	Dentifrice, dental
Geo	Earth	Geology
Hydro	Water	Hydroplane
Macro	Large	Macrocosm
Micro	Small; magnifies small things	Microcosm, microscope
Multi	Many	Multiply
Ped, pede, pedi	Foot	Pedal, centipede, pedicure
Phobia	Fear	Claustrophobia
Phon, phone	Sound	Phonics, telephone
Photo	Light	Photograph
Scope	Look	Telescope

Prefixes	Meaning	Examples
Ante-	Before	Antebellum
Anti-	Against	Anti-aircraft
Circum-	Around	Circumvent
Ex-, e-	Out of, from	Exit, emit
Extra-	Beyond	Extraordinary
Fore-	Front	Forehead
Inter-	Among; between	Intersect
Intra-	Within	Intramural
Mis-	wrong	Misadvise, mislead
Non-	No, not	Nonintervention
Post-	After	Postoperative
Pre-	Before	Preview
Semi-	Half	Semiannual
Sub-	Under	Submarine
Super, sur-	Above, over	Superintendent, surpass
Trans-	Across, over	Transfer
Ultra-	beyond	ultrashort



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Suffixes	Meaning	Examples
-an	Having to do with; inhabitant	Shakespearean, European
-ary, -arium, -orium	Place for, belonging to	Military, aquarium, auditorium
-ent	One who	President
-er	A person, thing performing an act	Runner, handler
-ess	Female	Heiress
-est	Superlative ending	Warmest, smartest
-ful	Full of	Playful
-hood	State of being	Neighborhood, childhood
-ish	Like, tending toward	Greenish, smallish
-ive	Of or having to do with	Sportive
-ize	Cause to become or resemble	Americanize
-less	Without	Smokeless, meatless
-ment	Act of or state of	Bewilderment
-ous	Full of	Joyous
-sect	To cut	Bisect